

Rt Hon David Lammy MP

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Sent via email

20 November 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you on behalf of the British Medical Association to express our profound concern for the current and future healthcare situation in Gaza. The ongoing conflict has devastated healthcare, created a public health crisis and caused immense human suffering, making urgent action on both humanitarian and health grounds imperative.

As doctors we are deeply alarmed by the [direct and sustained attacks](#) on healthcare, the [arbitrary detention of Palestinian medical staff](#), the disregard for medical impartiality and neutrality, and the [repeated denials and delays](#) of medical personnel, aid and supplies into Gaza. These actions have made it impossible for the remaining medical staff to deliver life-saving treatment for critically sick and wounded patients.

One vital avenue to alleviate pressure on the healthcare system and prevent further morbidity and mortality is through the medical evacuation of critically injured and sick patients to third countries. Neighbouring countries, along with the [European Union](#), have been working with relevant authorities to facilitate such evacuations for patients and their caregivers. However, despite these efforts, there are [over 14,000 people](#) - many of them children - who remain in urgent need of medical evacuation, with only 5,000 receiving specialised treatments outside Gaza since October 2023. You will know that since Israeli authorities assumed full control of the Rafah Border in May 2024, the number of patients permitted to evacuate has [diminished significantly](#). This obstruction is not only a humanitarian crisis, but a legal one. The denial of medical evacuations by occupying powers constitutes a direct violation of international humanitarian law which mandates urgent evacuations to ensure the survival and protection of these patients.

We wrote to your predecessor in January 2024 asking for the UK government to work with other governments for an immediate ceasefire, the return of all hostages, respect for international humanitarian law, respect for medical impartiality and neutrality, and the resumption of supplies and resources entering Gaza. We reiterate [these calls](#) but, in light of the issues outlined above, we further call on the UK to make a meaningful humanitarian gesture through increased access to UK healthcare institutions. Specifically, we urge the government to take two critical steps:

1. Work with relevant authorities to ensure safe, sustained, timely and organised medical evacuation for critically ill and injured patients, and their companions, from Gaza to UK healthcare facilities that are well equipped to handle their complex and often life-threatening medical conditions. It is essential that Palestinians have access to the

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necessary support and services for their recovery, and that protocols are followed to uphold and guarantee their right to return when they choose.

2. Introduce a humanitarian visa scheme to facilitate the safe arrival of doctors and medical students from the region to the UK, recognising the assault on healthcare facilities and the threats medical professionals face.

The UK has a proud tradition of providing humanitarian aid and leadership in global health, and now is the time to act decisively in response to this ongoing crisis. Beyond the necessary measures the government must take to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, we trust you will fully grasp the critical urgency of this situation and take immediate action to support both Palestinian healthcare professionals and those in dire need of urgent medical care outside of Gaza.

The BMA would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss these issues further.


Yours sincerely,



Dr Kitty Mohan
Chair, BMA International Committee



Dr Latifa Patel
Chair, BMA Representative Body



Dr Andy Green
Chair, BMA Medical Ethics Committee